Farewell to Poesy

and other Poems

William H. Davies

John C. Llewellyn
B55 1944

IT

High wheeling over hill and plain
He scans the distant land below,
Intent on every hand to gain
Fresh knowledge of his stealthy foe.
The battery, so well concealed
Behind the wooded hillock's rise,
Is plainly to his gaze revealed
And he has marked it as he flies.

The ant-like men who scar the earth
With long entrenchments here or there—
What are their pains and labour worth
When he is circling in the air?
Horsemen and foot, he marks them all
From front to base, from wing to wing.
He sees their legions onward crawl
To mimic battle with their King.

No more shall mole-like armies grope
By hidden ways to conflict dire,
Till from beyond the sheltering slope
There pours the sudden murderous fire.
The hawk is there! The hawk has seen!
And swiftly takes his homeward way,
He is the eyes, alert and keen
Of England's Army of to-day!

TOUCHSTONE.

Farewell to Poesy
And Other Pieces

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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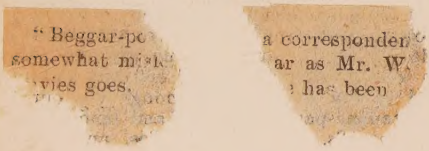

London

A. C. Fifield, 13 Clifford's Inn, E.C.

1910

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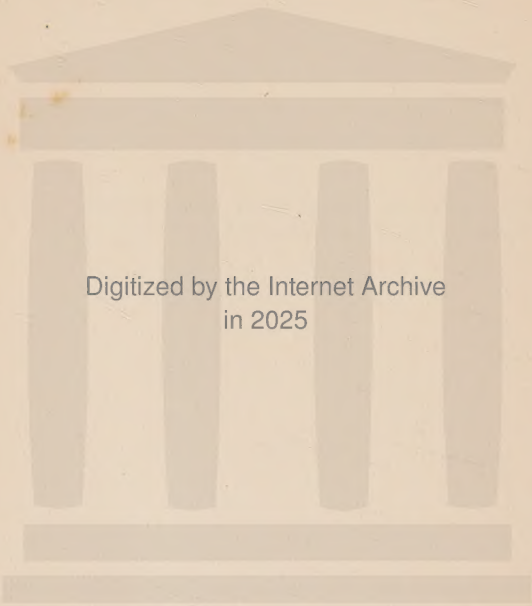
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Farewell to Poesy

SWEET Poesy, why art thou dumb!
I loved thee as my captive bird,
That sang me songs when spring was gone,
And birds of freedom were not heard;
Nor dreamt thou wouldst turn false and cold
When needed most, by men grown old.

Sweet Poesy, why art thou dumb!
I fear thy singing days are done;
The poet in my soul is dying,
And every charm in life is gone;
In vain birds scold and flowers do plead—
The poet dies, his heart doth bleed.

The Dark Hour

AND now, when merry winds do blow,
And rain makes trees look fresh,
An overpowering staleness holds
This mortal flesh.

Though I do love to feel the rain,
And be by winds well blown—
The mystery of mortal life
Doth press me down.

And, in this mood, come now what will,
Shine Rainbow, Cuckoo call;
There is no thing in Heaven or Earth
Can lift my soul.

I know not where this state comes from—
No cause for grief I know;
The Earth around is fresh and green,
Flowers near me grow.

I sit between two fair Rose trees;
Red roses on my right,
And on my left side roses are
A lovely white.

The little birds are full of joy,
Lambs bleating all the day;
The colt runs after the old mare,
And children play.

And still there comes this dark, dark hour—
Which is not born of Care;
Into my heart it creeps before
I am aware.

Jenny Wren

HER sight is short, she comes quite near;
A foot to me's a mile to her;
And she is known as Jenny Wren,
The smallest bird in England. When
I heard that little bird at first,
Methought her frame would surely burst

With earnest song. Oft had I seen
Her running under leaves so green,
Or in the grass when fresh and wet,
As though her wings she would forget.
And, seeing this, I said to her—
"My pretty runner, you prefer
To be a thing to run unheard
Through leaves and grass, and not a bird!"
'Twas then she burst, to prove me wrong,
Into a sudden storm of song;
So very loud and earnest, I
Feared she would break her heart and die.
"Nay, nay," I laughed, "be you no thing
To run unheard, sweet scold, but sing!
O I could hear your voice near me,
Above the din in that oak tree,
When almost all the twigs on top
Had starlings singing without stop."

The Milkmaid's Song

A MILKMAID, on a Summer's day,
Was singing, as she milked away.

The heavy, sullen cows had come
Racing when her voice called them home.

A three-legged stool, a pail that glows,
To sit and sing, and milk her cows.

Her cheeks were red, her eyes were bright,
And, like that milk, her neck was white.

The birds around her tuned their throats—
In vain—to take her perfect notes.

The cow gave up the last milk-drop,
And tarried till her song should stop.

"Wilt marry me, sweet Maid?" I said.
She laughed in scorn, and tossed her head.

And she had milked the crimson flood
E'en to my heart's last drop of blood.

The Idiot and the Child

THERE was a house where an old dame
Lived with a son, his child and wife;
And with a son of fifty years,
An idiot all his life.

When others wept this idiot laughed,
When others laughed he then would weep;
The married pair took oath his eyes
Did never close in sleep.

Death came that way, and which think you
Fell under that old tyrant's spell?
He breathed upon that little child,
Who loved her life so well.

This made the idiot chuckle hard:
The old dame looked at that child dead
And him she loved—"Ah, well; thank God
It is no worse!" she said.

A Month Ago

A MONTH ago, ah happy me!
I found a pool with no man by;
Which clouds had made so deep to see,
As was the height from earth to sky;
It was a lovely day in spring,
And flowers did bloom, and birds did sing.

I hummed with bees, I stared with sheep,
I whistled with the birds for joy;
I shook the butterflies from sleep,
Their time the better to employ;
And when night came I laughed with glee,
When I the Moon's sad face did see.

A month ago, ah happy me!
O woeful, woeful days since then!
For I a banished man must be,
Out of the land of happy men;
On me a woman trained her charms,
To win another to her arms.

The Trusting Young

AH, little bird, thou art not old;
Thou knowest no danger in this world,
So full of trust, like all young things.
A child knows not the adder stings;
Adders are lovely worms to it;
Tigers would be big cats to pet,

And bears be bigger dogs to love.
But future days too soon will prove
To every child and bird, life's state
Divides itself with love and hate.
So, when I see thee come so near
And, though I threaten, take no fear,
I think of days when thou wilt find
As many cruel things as kind.
All trusting young things come to this;
Look how a loving child would kiss
The civil landlord that did come
To turn it out of house and home;
Nor guessed her mother's look of grief
Was through that law-supported thief.

Now

WHEN I was in yon town, and had
Stones all round me, hard and cold,
My flesh was firm, my sight was keen,
And still I felt my heart grow old.

But now, with this green world around,
By my great love for it! I swear,
Though my flesh shrink, and my sight fail,
My heart will not grow old with care.

When I do hear these joyful birds,
I cannot sit with my heart dumb;
I cannot walk among these flowers,
But I must help the bees to hum.

My heart has echoes for all things,
The wind, the rain, the bird and bee;
'Tis I that—now—can carry Time,
Who in that town must carry me.

I see not now the great coke fire
With ten men seated there, or more,
Like frogs on logs; and one man fall
Dying across the boarded floor.

I see instead the flowers and clouds,
I hear the rills, the birds and bees:
The Squirrel flies before the storm
He makes himself in leafy trees.

Rose

SWEET Margaret's laugh can make
Her whole plump body shake.

Jane's cherry lips can show
Their white stones in a row.

A soft June smile steals out
Of Mary's April pout.

Sweet creatures swim and play
In Maud's blue pools all day.

But when Rose walks abroad,
Jane, Margaret, Mary, Maud,

Do stand as little chance
To throw a lovely glance,

As the Moon that's in the sky
While still the Sun is high.

The Green Tent

SUMMER has spread a cool, green tent
Upon the bare poles of this tree;
Where 'tis a joy to sit all day,
And hear the small birds' melody;
To see the sheep stand bolt upright,
Nibbling at grass almost their height.

And much I marvel now how men
Can waste their fleeting days in greed;
That one man should desire more gold
Than twenty men should truly need;
For is not this green tent more sweet
Than any chamber of the great?

This tent, at which I spend my day,
Was made at Nature's cost, not mine;
And when night comes, and I must sleep,
No matter if my room be fine
Or common, for Content and Health
Can sleep without the power of Wealth.

Selfish Hearts

WITHOUT a thought
If death brings in
Joy for our virtue,
Pain for our sin—

Know this hard truth:
They live on earth
The sweetest life,
Who, rich from birth,

Do then maintain
A selfish mind;
To moans are deaf,
To tears are blind.

Weep for the poor
You find in books:
From living poor
Avert your looks.

Then dance and sing,
Dress, sail or ride;
Go in your coach
To halls of Pride.

A selfish heart,
And rich from birth,
No sweeter life
Can be on earth.

To match thy joy,
  There lives but one:
The beggar who
  Lives all alone.

With selfish heart,
  And shameless, he
Begs bread at huts,
  And almshouse tea.

O selfish pair!
  I know not which
Is happiest—
  So poor, or rich.

The decent poor,
  The working mass,
In misery
  Their lives must pass.

To the Wind at Morn

IS it for you
  The Larks sing loud,
The Leaves clap hands,
  The Lilies nod?
Do they forget
  The screams so wild,
Heard all the night—
  Where is that child?

No Master

INDEED this is sweet life! my hand
Is under no proud man's command;
There is no voice to break my rest
Before a bird has left its nest;
There is no man to change my mood,
Would I go nutting in the wood;
No man to pluck my sleeve and say—
I want thy labour for this day;
No man to keep me out of sight,
When that dear Sun is shining bright.
None but my friends shall have command
Upon my time, my heart and hand;
I'll rise from sleep to help a friend,
But let no stranger orders send,
Or hear my curses fast and thick,
Which in his purse-proud throat will stick
Like burs. If I cannot be free
To do such work as pleases me,
Near woodland pools and under trees,
You'll get no work at all; for I
Would rather live this life and die
A beggar or a thief, than be
A working slave with no days free.

The Dumb World

I CANNOT see the short, white curls
Upon the forehead of an Ox,
But what I see them dripping with
That poor thing's blood, and hear the axe;

Death of a little Child

When I see calves and lambs, I see
Them led to death; I see no bird
Or rabbit cross the open field
But what a sudden shot is heard;
A shout that tells me men aim true,
For death or wound, doth chill me through.

The shot that kills a hare or bird
Doth pass through me; I feel the wound
When those poor things find peace in death,
And when I hear no more that sound.
These cat-like men do hate to see
Small lives in happy motion; I
Would almost rather hide my face
From Nature than pass these men by:
And rather see a battle than
A dumb thing near a drunken man.

On the Death of a little Child

HER pretty dances were her own,
Her songs were by no other sung;
And all the laughter in her house
Was started by her own sweet tongue.

This little dance and song composer,
This laughter maker, sweet and small,
Will never more be seen or heard—
For her the Sexton's bell does toll.

The shining eyes are closed for aye,
And that small, crimson mouth of mirth;
The little feet, the little hands—
All stiff and cold inside the earth.

The Poppy

SWEET Poppy, when thy beauty's gone,
Thy leaves will fall, thy life be done.

No sooner do thy leaves decay,
Than thou dost throw thy life away.

Thou dost not keep them like the Rose,
When she her crimson charms doth lose.

Whose smudgèd face for days is seen,
Which neither dew nor rain can clean.

Thou dost not shrink and dry at last,
To mock that beauty of thy past.

The first soft breeze that comes along
Shall strip thee—when thy leaves go wrong.

And when to-morrow we look there,
The place is clean where thy leaves were.

Thou dost not linger on, like man,
Till thou art bent, and dry, and wan.

"So let me die when my charms fade,
Like that sweet flower"—said Beauty's maid.

"So, like that Poppy, let me die,"
Said Genius—"when my springs go dry."

Knitting

E'EN though her tongue may by its force
Leave me as helpless as a horse,
When saucy pup doth bark at him—
I'll love her better for that whim.
No steady, summer's love for me,
But let her still uncertain be;
Like spring, whose gusts, and frowns, and showers,
Do grow us fresher, lovelier flowers.
No substances on earth can make
The joy I from her shadow take;
When first I saw her face, I could
Not help draw near her where she stood;
I felt more joy than when a Bee
Sees in a garden a Plum tree
All blossoms and no leaves, and he
Leaps o'er the fence immediately.
I like to see her when she sits—
Not dreaming I look on—and knits;
To see her hands, with grace so light,
Stabbing the wool that's red or white;
With shining needles, sharp and long,
That never seem to go far wrong.
And that sight better pleases me
Than green hills in the sun; to see
The beach, what time the tide goes out,
And leaves his gold spread all about.

Clouds

MY Fancy loves to play with Clouds
That hour by hour can change Heaven's face;
For I am sure of my delight,
In green or stony place.

Sometimes they on tall mountains pile
Mountains of silver, twice as high;
And then they break and lie like rocks
All over the wide sky.

And then I see flocks very fair;
And sometimes, near their fleeces white,
Are small, black lambs that soon will grow
And hide their mothers quite.

Sometimes, like little fishes, they
Are all one size, and one great shoal;
Sometimes they like big sailing ships
Across the blue sky roll.

Sometimes I see small Cloudlets tow
Big, heavy Clouds across those skies—
Like little Ants that carry off
Dead Moths ten times their size.

Sometimes I see at morn bright Clouds
That stand so still, they make me stare;
It seems as they had trained all night
To make no motion there.

In the Country

THIS life is sweetest; in this wood
I hear no children cry for food;
I see no woman, white with care;
No man, with muscles wasting here.

No doubt it is a selfish thing
To fly from human suffering;
No doubt he is a selfish man,
Who shuns poor creatures sad and wan.

But 'tis a wretched life to face
Hunger in almost every place;
Cursed with a hand that's empty, when
The heart is full to help all men.

Can I admire the statue great,
When living men starve at its feet!
Can I admire the park's green tree,
A roof for homeless misery!

When I can see few men in need,
I then have power to help by deed,
Nor lose my cheerfulness in pity—
Which I must do in every city.

For when I am in those great places,
I see ten thousand suffering faces;
Before me stares a wolfish eye,
Behind me creeps a groan or sigh.

The Kingfisher

IT was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues;
And, as her mother's name was Tears,
So runs it in thy blood to choose
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
In company with trees that weep.

Go you and, with such glorious hues,
Live with proud Peacocks in green parks;
On lawns as smooth as shining glass,
Let every feather show its marks;
Get thee on boughs and clap thy wings
Before the windows of proud kings.

Nay, lovely Bird, thou art not vain;
Thou hast no proud, ambitious mind;
I also love a quiet place
That's green, away from all mankind;
A lonely pool, and let a tree
Sigh with her bosom over me.

An Old House in London

IN fancy I can see thee stand
Again in the green meadow-land;
As in thine infancy, long past,
When Southwark was a lovely waste;
And Larks and Blackbirds sang around,
As common as their children found

So far away in these late days.
And thou didst like a lighthouse raise
Thy windows, that their light could show
Across the broad, green calm below ;
And there were trees, beneath whose boughs
Stood happy horses, sheep and cows.
And wilful brooks, that would not yield
To hedges, to mark out each field,
But every field that they passed through
Was by them cut and counted two.
From thy back windows thou couldst see,
Half-way between St. Paul's and thee,
Swans with their shadows, and the barge
Of state old Thames took in his charge.
Ah, wert thou now what thou wert then,
There were no need to fly from men.
Instead of those green meadows, now
Three hundred hungry children show
Rags and white faces at thy door
For charity. We see no more
Green lanes, but alleys dark instead ;
Where none can walk but fear to tread
On babes that crawl in dirt and slime.
And from thy windows, at this time,
Thou canst not see ten yards beyond,
For the high blocks that stand around ;
Buildings that ofttimes only give
One room in which five souls must live,
With but one window for their air.
Foul art thou now with lives of care,
For hungry children and men poor
Seek food and lodging at thy door ;
Thou that didst hear, in thy first hours,
Birds sing, and saw the sweet wild flowers.

Scotty's Luck

"FATTY," one day, called "Red-nosed Scot"
A viper! and then punched his nose;
Poor "Scotty" swore to have revenge
Before the week could close.

Now "Scotty" was a gambling man,
And, when his eyes were glassed and framed,
He saw in print, to his amaze,
A horse called "Viper" named.

At once that superstitious man
Backed "Viper" for the highest place;
And heard ere long, to his great joy,
That horse had won the race.

"Fatty," said "Scot," with grateful tears,
"You called me 'Viper,' to my shame—
But it was heavenly Providence
To call me by that name."

Happy Wind

OH, happy wind, how sweet
Thy life must be!
The great, proud fields of gold
Run after thee:
And here are flowers, with heads
To nod and shake;
And dreaming butterflies
To tease and wake.
Oh, happy wind, I say,
To be alive this day.

The Sluggard

A JAR of cider and my pipe,
In summer, under shady tree;
A book of one that made his mind
Live by its sweet simplicity:
Then must I laugh at kings who sit
In richest chambers, signing scrolls;
And princes cheered in public ways,
And stared at by a thousand fools.

Let me be free to wear my dreams,
Like weeds in some mad maiden's hair,
When she doth think the earth has not
Another maid so rich and fair;
And proudly smiles on rich and poor,
The queen of all fair women then:
So I, dressed in my idle dreams,
Will think myself the king of men.

The House Builder

THE Rain has lost more music keys,
One harp the less for Summer's Breeze;
The Sheep have lost one of their shades,
The Cows one place to rub their sides;
The crash has come, the Oak lies now,
With all its ruined branches, low.
And I am filled with angry pain;
But if I speak, it were as vain

As though a butterfly, poor fool,
Should try to move a stuggy bull!
Where this Oak stood a house must be,
Not half so fair as a green tree;
The crash that made my last hope fall,
Was music to that builder's soul.
No beauty in the bark he sees,
Nor leaves; the boughs and trunks of trees
Shape into planks before his eyes,
To build a house that he will prize.
He'd rather sit inside walls four,
With plaster roof and wooden floor,
Than under a green tree and hear,
As I have done, the birds' notes clear
Among the leaves in Summer. Yet,
What is this life, if we forget
To fill our ears when Nature sings,
Our eyes search for her lovely things?
Of which she keeps a wondrous store,
And charges us our love, no more.

Old Ragan

WHO lives in this black wooden hut?
Old Ragan lives there, all alone;
He cursed a lovely lady once,
Who let her shadow cross his own.

His tongue is a perpetual spring
Of oaths that never cease to drop;
Wouldst hear him swear? Speak kindly thus,
"Good morning, Ragan"—and then stop.

Sometimes a woman thoughtlessly
Has greeted Ragan in this way;
And she will not forget his look
And language till her dying day.

He throws his fowls their own eggshells,
Feeds them on thrice-boiled leaves of tea;
And dead flies on his window-sill,
He killed when they danced merrily.

A wicked, mean, suspicious man,
He growls to hear an infant's noise;
He hides behind the walls and trees,
To frighten little girls and boys.

What made old Ragan come to this?
Young men did jeer at him and shout;
So women, children and houseflies
Must bear the old man's vengeance out.

To a Flirt

YOU'LL get no help from me;
Make me no pool
To train thy looks to take
Some other fool.

No effigy of straw
To set in flame;
That gives another joy
And me the shame.

No tree on which to cut
His name and yours;
To be passed laughing by
In future hours.

I'll not prepare your nest—
You sly house-sparrow;
Prepare your heart for him—
Like a poor Swallow

Driven away, when I
Have helped his passion;
Condemned and banished at
Love's quarter session.

You'll get no help from me,
To make him prove,
With jealous looks and words,
His backward love.

On Expecting some Books

TO-MORROW they will come. I know
How rich their sweet contents are, so
Upon their dress let Fancy play—
Will it be blue, red, green or grey?
Sweet Books that I have oft heard named,
And seen stand up like blossoms framed,
Through many a common window shown—
When I was moneyless in town;
But never touched their leaves, nor bent
Close to them and inhaled their scent.
They'll come like snowdrops to a Bee
That, tired of empty dreams, can see

Real flowers at last. Until this time,
Now on the threshold of my prime,
I did not guess my poverty;
That none of these rich Books, that lie
Untouched on many a shelf—save when
A housemaid, dreaming of young men
And music, sport, and dance, and dress,
Will bang them for their dustiness—
That none of these were in my care;
To-morrow I will have them here.
Well do I know their value; they
Will not be purses found, which may
Be full of coppers, nails or keys—
They will not disappoint, like these.
Books I can always trust; for they
Will not tell neighbours what I say,
What time I go to bed and rise,
What eat and drink. They'll make no cries
For cloth to suit the season; no
Oft going out, to make me grow
Jealous of their long absence. When
I'm visited by living men,
They will not sulk and cast black looks
When left unflattered. These sweet Books
Will not be heard to grumble that
I keep the room too cold or hot;
The one in leather will not chide
To feel a cloth one touch his side.
O may their coming never cease!
May my book-family increase;
Clothes, pictures, ornaments of show,
Trinklets and mirrors—these can go
Outside, that all my Books may be
Together in one room with me.

The Sailor to his Parrot

THOU foul-mouthed wretch! Why dost thou choose
To learn bad language, and no good;
Canst thou not say "The Lord be praised"
As easy as "Hell's fire and blood"?

Why didst thou call the gentle priest
A thief and a damned rogue; and tell
The deacon's wife, who came to pray,
To hold her jaw and go to hell?

Thou art a foe, no friend of mine,
For all my thoughts thou givest away;
Whate'er I say in confidence,
Thou dost in evil hours betray.

Thy mind's for ever set on bad;
I cannot mutter one small curse,
But thou dost make it endless song,
And shout it to a neighbour's house.

Aye, swear to thy delight and ours,
When here I welcome shipmates home,
And thou canst see abundant grog—
But hold thy tongue when landsmen come.

Be dumb when widow Johnson's near,
Be dumb until our wedding day;
And after that—but not before—
She will enjoy the worst you say.

There is a time to speak and not;
When we're together, all is well;
But damn thy soul—What! you damn *mine!*
And you tell *me* to go to hell!

Time's Justice

ALAS! we live in days of shame,
That men, inventing some new game
For Pleasure's fools to idle time,
Are welcomed more than men of rhyme,
And men that master sound or paint;
And Genius must be still content
That, though not heeded now at all—
Great men are seen when their stars fall.

What fools we are! Here one man tramps
Collecting fossils, eggs or stamps;
Others in that dull, useless state
Of toads that kernel rocks; men great,
Though efforts they do make untold—
As misers make to reach their gold,
When sick and dying—could not wake
One thought in these for Beauty's sake.

The great man's work, when his life's past,
Will ripen like plucked fruit at last;
So let not Genius fear but what
Time will do justice to his lot,
And give no more or less; in sooth,
The world could not feel half the truth
If Genius had no power to see
One step beyond reality.

Take you no fear but Time is just;
He'll not give Genius to the dust,
With soul and common body joined;
You great man, now deemed mad of mind,
Scorned and abused like some white crow
That comes to make white feathers show
Inside a black crows' rookery—
Courage! Time proves thy sanity.

Angry

MY Love sits angry; see!
Her foot shakes in the light;
Her timid, little foot,
That else would hide from sight.

Her left hand props her cheek;
Its little finger plays
Upon her under-lip,
And makes a harp-like noise.

Her lip's red manuscript
She has unrolled and spread;
So I may read ill news,
And hang my guilty head.

My Love sits angry; see!
She's red up to her eyes;
And was her face flogged by
The wings of Butterflies?

Her right hand's in her lap,
So small, so soft, so white;
She in her anger makes
Five fingers hide from sight.

Two golden curls have now
Dropped out of their silk net;
There they must stop, for she
Will not restore them yet.

My Love, she is so fair
When in this angry way,
That did she guess my thoughts,
She'd quarrel every day.

The Call of the Sea

GONE are the days of canvas sails!
No more great sailors tell their tales
In country taverns, barter pearls
For kisses from strange little girls;
And when the landlord's merry daughter
Heard their rough jokes and shrieked with laughter,
They threw a muffler of rare fur,
That hid her neck from ear to ear.
Ho, ho! my merry men; they know
Where gold is plentiful—Sail ho!
How they did love the rude wild Sea!
The rude, unflattering Sea; for he
Will not lie down for monarch's yacht,
No more than merchant's barge; he'll not
Keep graves with marks of wood or stone
For fish or fowl, or human bone.
The Sea is loth to lose a friend;
Men of one voyage, who did spend
Six months with him, hear his vexed cry
Haunting their houses till they die.

And for the sake of him they let
The winds blow them, and raindrops wet
Their foreheads with fresh water sprays—
Thinking of his wild, salty days.
And well they love to saunter near
A river, and its motion hear;
And see ships lying in calm beds,
That danced upon seas' living heads;
And in their dreams they hear again
Men's voices in a hurricane—
Like ghosts complaining that their graves
Are moved by sacrilegious waves.
And they do love to stand and hear
The old seafaring men that fear
Land more than water; carts and trains
More than wild waves and hurricanes.
And they do walk with love and pride
The tattooed mariner beside—
Chains, anchors on his arm, and ships—
And listen to his bearded lips.
Aye, they will hear the Sea's vexed cry
Haunting their houses till they die.

Come, Honest Boys

YE who have nothing to conceal,
Come, honest boys, and drink with me;
Come, drink with me the sparkling ale,
And we'll not whisper calumny,
But laugh with all the power we can;
But all pale schemers who incline
To rise above your fellow man,
Touch not the sparkling ale or wine.

Give me strong ale to fire my blood,
  Content me with a lot that's bad ;
That is to me both drink and food,
  And warms me though I am ill-clad ;
A pot of ale, man owns the world :
  The poet hears his songs all sung,
Inventor sees his patents sold,
  The painter sees his pictures hung.

The creeds remind us oft of Death;
  But man's best creed is to forget
Death all the hours that he takes breath,
  And quaff the sparkling ale, and let
Creeds shout until they burst their lungs ;
  For what is better than to be
A-drinking ale and singing songs,
  In summer, under some green tree ?

Death's Game

DEATH can but play one game with me—
  If I do live alone ;
He cannot strike me a foul blow
  Through a belovèd one.

To-day he takes my neighbour's wife,
  And leaves a little child
To lie upon his breast and cry
  Like the Night-wind, so wild.

And every hour its voice is heard—
  Tell me where is she gone !
Death cannot play that game with me—
  If I do live alone.

To the New Year

WELCOME, New Year, but be more kind
Than thy dead father left behind;
If I may kiss no mouth that's red,
Give me the open mouth instead
Of a black bottle of old wine
To gurgle in its neck and mine.
Let not my belly once complain
For want of meat, or fruit, or grain;
But keep it always tight and quiet—
No matter if with drink or diet.
And, New Year, may I never need
In vain a pipeful of strong weed,
That sends my baby clouds on high
To join big brothers in the sky.
No gold I ask, but that I may
Have some small silver every day.
Not for one night let sleep forsake
My side, and show the Morning break;
Let me not hear Time's strokes in bed,
And feel the pain of one thought dead,
Who hears the earth cast in his grave.
I care not what poor clothes I have;
I'll only think it shame and sin
To show my naked thigh or shin
When the wind blows. Give me, New Year,
Tobacco, bread and meat, and beer.
Also a few old books, so I
Can read about an age gone by;
But as for how the present goes—
I'll thank the Lord the Devil knows.

The Philosophical Beggar.

WHEN I went in the woods this morn to sleep,
I saw an old man looking on the ground.
Said he: "Here, where a beggar ate his crust,
We see ten thousand little ants at work,
And they are earning now their winter's ease.
As for myself, I cannot rest from work;
I have no patience with those idle fools
That waste their days in mourning wasted time—
My brain must ever be at work. They say
Much work, and just a little pleasure mixed,
Is best for life; as flowers that live in shade
For twenty hours and sunlight four keep fresh
The longest and enjoy the longest life;
They do say this—but all my pleasure's work.
I work on small, when great themes fail my mind—
As cats, when they can catch no mice, content
Themselves with flies. If once I take a rest,
Then sudden famine takes my mind for days,
Which seeks but cannot find the barest feast.
How it doth fret my active Heart to see
The sloven Mind recovering from a day
Of idleness—letting Thoughts peep and none come
out.
Ah, wretched hours that follow rest! when men
Have no desire for pleasure, and would work,
But still their Minds do sulk from past neglect.
This world, this mystery of Time, of Life
And Death, where every riddle men explain
Does make another one, or many more—
Can always keep the human mind employed;

Old men that do persuade themselves life's work
Is but half done, must all die happy men.
E'en though we think the world and all things vain,
There lives a noble impulse in our minds
To strive and help to reach the perfect state.
Work, work, and thou hast joy; it matters not
If thou dost start upon a quest as vain
As children, when they seek a cuckoo's nest—
The joy is on the way, not at the end.
When I am in this world's society,
Then do I feel like some poor bird that would
Attend its young when people loiter near;
I see my thoughts like blossoms fade, and know
That they will die and never turn to fruit.
What juicy joints I threw away when young!
To think of those rich joints makes this meat sweet,
Near to the bone, which Time doth offer now.
Work, work, I say; sleep is sufficient rest;
It is the wage that Nature pays to all,
And when we spend our days in idleness,
She gives short time; and they that earn the least
Do grumble most, when she keeps back full pay.
"Now, woodman, do thy work, and I'll do mine—
An active man can almost break Death's heart."
Then with a pencil and a book he went
Mumbling and writing, into the deep woods.
Now, what an old, mad fool is that, methought;
He tries to make one hour do work for two,
To keep away the ghosts of murdered ones
He foully did to death when a small boy.
He'll work his brains, and then the world will rob
His hive of its pure honey; in its place
Put for his food cheap syrup of weak praise.
His mind's a garden, all the flowers are his;

But when he markets his sweet honey goods,
Then scoundrel bees, that have their hives elsewhere,
Will make themselves rich on his flowers' sweets.
I count the tramp as noble as that man
Who lives in idleness on wealth bequeathed,
And far more wise than yon old thinking fool.
Show me one happier than the tramp who has
His belly full, and good boots not too tight.
His careless heart has buried kin that live,
Those that have died he resurrects no more.
He does not know the farmer's spiteful joy,
Who, envying his near neighbour, laughs to see
The wild birds knock that man's fruit blossoms down;
He does not laugh to spite a bachelor,
As mothers do, that hear their babies scream.
We scorn the men that toil, as deep-sea men
Scorn those that sail on shallow lakes and streams—
Yet by our civil tongues we live and thrive.
Our tongues may be as venomous as those
Small flies that make the lazy oxen leap;
Like a ship's parrot I maybe could swear;
Like a ship's monkey for my cunning tricks—
But I have found a gently uttered lie
And civil tongue sufficient for my ends;
For we can find excuse for our escape—
As rats and mice pursued can find dark holes.
Is there a sound more cheerful than the tramp's
"Good morning, sir"? For in that sound he puts
His whole heart's gratitude that you do work
And sweat, and then make sacrifice for him.
His lips do whine, but how his heart does laugh!
To think that he is free to roam at will,

While others toil to keep that thing "Respect,"
Which makes them starve—if they become like
him.
If I hear not my belly's voice, nor feel
The cold; if I toil not for other men—
I ask no more; contented with my bread
Ten times outweighing meat, and water fresh.
When I this morn did beg a rich man's house,
"Go to the bees, thou sluggard"—he replied.
"And to the devil, you"—I answered him.
Then stood and cursed him, worse than farmer when
He sees the Crows turn his green meadow black.
Go to the bees, thou sluggard! Me! From *him!*
And must I be a slave, like thousands more,
To rise before the Sun, and go—in spite
Of fog, rain, wind or hail—to serve his like?
And if perchance I'm hungry at my work,
I still must fast until a certain hour;
If I am sleepy still, when I should rise,
I must not sleep, but up and work for him!
Nature gave me no extra bone for this;
The rich man cannot know a poor man's life—
No more than hands, that are unwiped and wet,
Can feel if clothes are dry. Go, sluggard, work!
It makes me laugh; Care has them soon her slaves
Who dream of duty to their fellow-men,
And set a value on each passing hour.
If rich men are the winter's kings, the kings
Of summer are true beggars—that be sure.
Then, happy beggars can recline on stones
With more content than lords sit cushioned chairs;
Their pleasant houses are the leafy trees,
Whose floors are carpeted with grass or moss;
They sleep upon the new-mown hay at night,

And in the daytime to their liking mix
The sun and shade. Oft in forsaken house—
Where spirits drove the living out—they sleep;
Ghosts cannot deal with beggars bold, who have
Less reverence than the spiders that weave webs
Inside the sacred nostrils of a joss.
And see our health; we live on sun and air,
Plain food and water, and outlive rich men,
With all their physic, wines and cleanliness.
Ah, cleanliness! That strikes a woeful note
To those poor tramps that seek the workhouse oft,
That fear to beg, and should be working men;
For, after they have ta'en a workhouse bath,
And their clothes cleaned, how lonely they must feel
When all the fleas that tickled them are dead.
Of Death—who still surprises foolish men,
As though he came but yesterday—the tramp
Thinks not; or takes a little laugh at Death
Ere Death grins everlastingly at him.
The happy tramp cares not if he doth lie
At last between white sheets or on cows' dung.
He has no squeamish taste: he could almost
Eat things alive, in little bits, like birds—
Or lick the streets like Turkey's sacred dogs.
Ah, dogs! that strikes another woeful note.
Many a village have I left through them,
When one had cause—or thought he had—to bark,
And in a while a score of others joined,
Barking because he barked, and nothing more,
And hungry I have had to leave that place.
Some dogs will bite; those small dogs with big heads—

It is the size of these dogs' *heads* we fear,
And not so much how big their bodies are.
If one thing spoils our life it is the dog.
Now, wherefore should I work my flesh or mind?
I knew Will Davies well; a beggar once,
Till he went mad and started writing books.
Nature, I swear, did ne'er commit worse crime
Than when she gives out genius to the poor;
He is a leper every man would shun;
A lighthouse fast upon the rocks of Want,
To warn men, with his light, to keep away;
And so they do—as far as body goes—
So that they may not witness his distress,
But still they pester him from distant parts.
A beggar's body has far better friends
In nibbling fleas that will not let him sleep,
Than any people's poet whose soul has
More friends than wanted, but scarce one
Real friend to question how his body fares.
Fame's like a nightingale, so sweet at first,
Whose voice soon like a common frog doth croak,
Until we wonder if we hear the same sweet bird.
I cannot see at all why I should work
My mind or body for this cruel world—
I'm no mad poet, like the one I name.
'Tis work, work, work—in every place; it haunts
Me like a painted lady whose sad eyes
Can watch us still, whichever way we look.
Now, let me eat; here's cake, and bread and jam—
I wonder if there's butter in between.
And here's a Christian journal a kind dame
Wrapped round the food to help my happy soul.
What! here's a poem by the poet-tramp.

Out, life of care!
Man lives to fret
For some vain thing
He cannot get.

The Cities crave
Green solitude;
The Country craves
A multitude.

Man lives to want;
The rich man's lot
Is to want things
The poor know not.

And no man dies
But must look back
With sorrow on
His own past track.

If beggar has
No child or wife,
He, of all men,
Enjoys most life.

When rich men loathe
Their meat and wine,
He thinks dry bread
And water fine.

When Fame's as sick
As Failure is,
He snores on straw,
In quiet bliss.

A truthful song, but 'twill not pay his rent.
An English poet! Where's the milk? Me-aw!
If he would thrive, let him be false as hell,
And bow-wow fierce at France or Germany.
What makes us tramps the happiest of all men?
Our hearts are free of envy, care and greed.
The miser thinks the Sun has not one flower
As fair as his gold heap the dark has grown;
He trembles if the Moon at night comes through
His lattice, with her silver of no worth;
True beggars laugh at him, and do not shake
With greed, like rats that hear a glutton eat,
When they behold a man more richly clad.
Nay, let plain food but keep their bellies tight,
And they will envy none their cloth or land.

Fancy

HOW sad my life had been were't not for her,
I know not; everywhere I looked were heaps
Of moving flesh, silk dresses mixed with rags,
And solid blocks of stone, with squares of glass—
Hard to my sight. That dreadful din! My nerve
Fell all apart, e'en as a wave, impaled
Upon a rock, breaks into quivering drops.
There, men were sat with neither home nor hope,
Ungreeted—save by some lost dog or cat.
There saw I cold and ragged, hungry men
Sit at the feet of statues which the rich
Admired, nor heeded those poor men of flesh.
And as that thief, the Wind, will drink the dew

While Phœbus fights the Clouds, so did the rich
Cheat honest workers of their just reward.
Where'er I looked I saw no beauty there;
Plenty of shops and markets with dead meat,
And other stuff to satisfy man's flesh,
But little for man's soul. A dreadful life,
To live in that stone town without a change;
As though men's souls did not need Nature's charms,
And putting out to grass, like common beasts,
To keep life healthy, fresh and of good cheer.
I blessed sweet Fancy for her favour then;
That oft she robbed my outward eyes of power
To fill the mind with common objects, and
My ears of power to take in common sounds.
And when I saw that here—where thousands lived
In houses without gardens, and the air
Was no true friend to any thing that lived,
And little beauty was—when I saw she,
In spite of that dull town, could bring delight—
Fancy, I cried, thou shalt be my life's Love.
If I do so exalt thee in my life,
There'll be no fear that Death will take thee first,
For we must die together, as we lived.
Much am I pleased with thee; for thou hast more
Sweet antics than a Squirrel on the boughs,
Who, after he has made the green leaves fight,
Slides to the ground for safety. I am sick
Of this loud noise and sights of poverty;
Here, where the poor do either pass away,
Quiet as winds at sundown, starved and lost—
Or drink, and fight like cats that arch their backs
And stretch their legs to twice their common length.

To which she said: He who can sit alone
In solitude, content with his own thoughts,
Can have life's best and cheapest joy; which needs
No purse of gold, no pride of outward show,
Like joy that's purchased from society;
And only by my power canst thou do this.
Thou dost not know true joy of living yet:
Thy mind is as a port that takes ships in,
But when alone with me in solitude,
A greater joy will be to send ships out.
Sweet Thoughts shall tease and romp with thee all day,
Till Sleep will pity thy joy-weary Mind,
And sink thee in her depths—but thou shalt still
Be followed by those Torments sweet and wild.
Aye, I will make thy life of purest joy;
A fire that has no smoke, a thornless rose;
A love without one breath of jealousy—
A heaven that has no knowledge of mankind.
For I will then with my sweet visions clear
Thy memory of these scenes depraved and sad,
Of hungry children and their parents drunk.
Thou night and day shalt sing; I'll give two souls
In one—the Lark's and Nightingale's; to sing
By Sun and Moon; and songs as sweet as birds
Make at the birth of April, when Spring crowns
His first day with a rainbow—thou shalt sing.
And I will give thy Mind such dreams that when
Thy Body, her blackmailer, threatens her,
To satisfy his greed for worldly things—
Thou wilt have courage to say nay. And thou
Shalt see again the Ocean bear the Sun

Into the arms of Heaven, his smiling nurse;
And see again the Sun that sank long since
At Severn's Mouth, with that great sail of gold,
That covered all the West; and many more
Scenes, dear to Memory, I will show thy Mind.
For thou shalt see that Meadow burned in two
By fiery Malpas Brook; and hear again
The voice of Ebbw in his lovely park,
Counting its ferns, its rabbits, sheep and deer;
And sweeter music he shall make for thee
Than seamaid ever wasted, when she tried,
With every trick known to her throat, to stop
The Phantom Ship. Come, let us settle then
In some small village which the Cuckoo loves
To haunt and startle. I will give each day
Far sweeter dreams than Love gives her first night.
Much fairer Clouds are there, and brighter Suns,
And Skies more clear and blue; and Night's small Star
Can shine as bright as Mars and Venus here.
There, many a happy wood can hear a Brook
Enjoy his everlasting holiday,
When Birds are silent and no Children come.
Come then, and I will be as true to thee
As snow to the high Mountain, or the Wind
That never leaves the Ocean for a day.
Yes, Sweet, I answered, we will live alone
In some green Village that awake is far
More happy than a City in its sleep.
So we departed, hand in hand for joy;
And, when arrived in that green world, I found
Such peace and ease as only sailors know,
When they return to the wild elements

After a Port has robbed and beaten them.
O I was like a Wasp for joy, when he's
Inside a juicy plum, and near the stone,
Where it is sweetest. I could never know
That cunning Time was plucking me alive
Of youth and strength and beauty—when I looked
Into the eyes of horses, sheep and cows,
Sure that their hearts were innocent of sin.
And she had power to change all common forms
Into things lovely or of interest;
Could give a man's face to the rock or tree,
And bodies of fair women to the Clouds.
She was a sweet wild flower, that much preferred
Wild brooks to fountains and hedge banks to lawns.
It was a joy to hear the horses crop
The sweet, short grass; and see the dappled cows
Knee deep in grass or water; and to watch
The green leaves smoking, when their puffs made me
Expect to hear them smack their lips like men,
Or show some fire; and hear the summer's Wind
Whispering in the ears of corn—and Birds
That whistled while the leaves were drinking rain.
And by her sweet translation I could read
The language of all flowers, and birds and clouds,
And was a master of their tongues. I saw
Among the leaves the cobweb starred with dew,
Saw Rainbows that had tunnelled half the sky;
And as the Lark, that hails the rising Sun,
Will not forget to praise him when he sets—
So did I bless at night each happy day.

And in their turn all things gave up their
charms;
One day it was a Cloud, the next a Flower;
Then 'twas a Bird, the Rain or Wind; and then
A full survey of Nature. Sweet to hear
Red Robin sing, and seek among the leaves
The body of that piercing sweetness; or
The Nightingales, paced by a thunderstorm,
Sing at their highest pitch; or to walk forth
At early morn in Spring, when all was still,
And hear the small Birds screaming in the trees,
Before the human world doth wake from sleep.
For it was Springtime then—when I was led
By Fancy into that green solitude,
And all the Birds were happy day and night;
When Day's sweet Birds had done, I could not
sleep
For Nightingales, whose notes were links to make
One chain of song to run through all the Spring.
The cunning Cuckoo changed his place each time,
Now North, now South, now East, now West
was heard—
Knowing that trick would make his voice keep
fresh.
Then, saw the Primrose on a distant bank,
And, guided by his golden light, drew close
And found a Violet at his side—sweet thing!
A joy to walk abroad with Fancy then;
When I beheld a Rainbow or fair Cloud,
She gave my Mind free copies, which would last
When their originals were perished quite;
And for my copies I pay no man rent,
Nor need insure them—which are proof
'Gainst loss by water, thieves and fire. When I

Awoke, would hasten forth to see the Sun
Dance with another happy Day; for soon
He in his summer's strength could laugh at
Clouds.
And we would walk green lanes, so still and lone
That Reynard walked them without hurry, and
Felt safer than in woods; down some green lane
That's only ten feet wide, and only one
Foot in the centre white; which is the time
When June, with her abundant leaves and grass,
Makes narrow paths of lanes, and lanes of roads;
When she in all her leafy glory comes,
And clothes the naked trees in every limb.
Not much I missed with Fancy at my side,
Of living things or dead: the Moon, alone,
That set her sheet to sail the heavenly Sea,
To test if safe for piloting the Stars;
Or we would watch the Squirrel hide his nuts,
And stand the blades of grass upright again,
And still eye it suspiciously; or Crows,
Tossing their bright black bodies in the Sun,
And looking like white Pigeons. Wonderful
That Paradise which Fancy gave my Mind,
In which the body had no luxury
Of either food or drink or furniture.
Where'er I was, let her be near and then
My Body trembled like a sucking Bee's;
Life was a joy, no matter if the hour
Was wet and windy, cold, or dry and calm.
Sometimes there was not wind enough to shake
The lifeless leaf caught by a spider's thread,
And held suspended; and no sound of life—
Save distant bark of dog, the moo of cow
Or calf, the baa of sheep; or the church bell,

That made forgetful birds renew their songs.
And when, in that still hour, from Traffic's stir,
I looked upon the Sun in Heaven, his eye
Seemed burning with a great intelligence.
She sometimes sang at morn a song so sweet
That I must banish her until my soul
Repeated it a hundred times and more.
She kept me safe from that strong company
Of Gambling, Gluttony, and Drink, and Lust,
That ruin many. She could wake me in
The night to sing, as May wakes sleeping birds;
With visions of the hills and valleys, woods
And streams, and clouds; and all the flowers that came
Between the Snowdrop and Chrysanthemum.
And well she entertained my Winter nights;
For by her power I heard a kettle sing
As sweet a song as any bird made, when
In May the Sun was drying his wet wings.
That voice was small, but O what passion! like
A Skylark's voice, were he a Wasp in size.
All troubles did escape my Mind, when I,
With Fancy near, looked into my red fire;
To hear the battle of its blaze, or see
It in a red spell deep. To see two flames
Crouch low to box, and then stand tall; and then
To hear the blows distinct, and hard and fast—
Like carpet hung and beaten by a stick.
Aye, with that Maid it was a joy to live,
No matter had I Nature's Sun outdoors,
Or my own sun made out of wood and coal.
Then travelled we to many a pleasant land,
Where lovely fruit did grow so plentiful

That men that stole it were not counted thieves.
And we did cross high mountains white and bleak,
Which nothing with two feet or four had crossed,
Save birds on wings; and other mountains that
Could take the name of forests with their own.
We heard the water wash the island beach
Where giant turtles lay; and heard the roar
Of captains in a hurricane. Saw ships
Rolled by the waves, and the Pacific make
His waterspouts, that rolled ships far away—
And whirlpools strongest ships could not pass through.
And by her power I saw Thames' face as clear
As Heaven's above, when he had grass to kiss
Twice in twelve hours. I saw the town of Troy
With Helen there, that time when she made Jove
And his Queen almost empty Heaven, to fight
For her cause or against. Black walls saw I,
Of castles old, part leafy and part bare;
And lonely abbeys tumbling down, that once
Were rich enough to ruin a king's soul.
With her I saw the rocks that Orpheus moved,
And trees that to his music danced like men;
And we did visit Mab's bright court, when it
Was all alight for foreign fairies; I
Saw by her power the golden barge that made
The black Nile clear in every place it went.
She to my Mind made it a common sight
To see the secret pails and bowls of pearls
Owned by a shah or sultan; she did make
My room more rich than theirs, with stuff that fire
Burned not, nor water spoiled, nor the winds tore.

My mind could watch the shepherd move his sheep
That, like drilled soldiers, one pace kept; and when
One ran, all ran; and when he stopped, all stopped.
We walked the woods and fields; sometimes in shade,
And sometimes out; and crouched behind green banks,
To spy on Ariel in the wind.
Alas!
Soon she began to make her absence known.
Then to my heart came dark Despondency,
And perched on it, e'en as a Hell's black rook
Will stand upon the head of a white Ewe.
Fool that I was to give her my whole heart!
I should have kept sweet Wine, or Dance, or Dress,
To take her place with pleasure—as a bird
Sings for the rain when Phœbus hides his light.
Ah, misery! that I should think this Maid
Would answer to my call whene'er I wished;
That when my Heart desired her she would come
And set my Mind in motion—foolish thought!
As though the Mind had not its milking hours,
And never failed. So, every night, alone,
When Fancy had been absent all the day,
Late would I sit, in hope she'd charm me yet
With one sweet little verse ere sleep could come,
And oft I sat and yearned for her in vain.
Come to me now, Love, while this Blackbird sings;
Now, while the Butterfly's on that warm stone;
Come, while the bosom of yon cloud is white
And full to bursting—nay, she would not come.
It was a dreadful life, when she was gone,

To own a restless sea no vessel sailed.
My bread went stale and sour; I felt no joy,
Though Skylarks sang in Heaven and Rainbows shone.
O it was Hell! That I had sacrificed
All entertainment of Society,
Music, and Wine, and Woman for her sake,
And she to leave me, taking every charm
Away with her, of water, earth and sky.
Since I came here to live for her alone,
Then what is life, if she forsakes me now!
A little child that has no speech at all,
Is happy with a sound none understand;
But when I heard the tell-tale Lark at morn,
Counting Earth's dewdrops to the eager Sun;
And when I saw the Evening gay with clouds
Of various hues, like flags upon a ship
That entertains its captain's new-made bride,
And, left by Fancy, had no power to speak—
Then O that I had no more speech than babes,
So happy with a simple cry! When she
Was gone, the birds seemed idle chatterers;
The flowers were common smirks that forced their charms,
No better than the leaves seen everywhere,
Made common by their number and one hue.
When she was near, my house was like that one
That has a living heir just born; when absent—
'Twas like a house that has an heir born dead.
When she was near, I could not hear the clock
Cry out the hour; but, in her absence, heard
Its smallest whisper, every tick it made.
And so I grieved, but she no sooner came
Than I with joy forgave her with a kiss;

And in that sudden blaze of pleasure, all
My smoky wrath went soon; my anger dropped—
Though for a week my curses had not ceased;
Dropped like a timid Star that cannot stand
Its bright society.
When for a month
She had not visited my waiting Mind,
'Twas then I spake out loud and bitterly.
Thou, false as that bright Sun, when he doth coax
Bees out ere Spring is ready with her flowers—
Why didst thou lead me here and then forsake me!
Thy voice as sweet and false as hers of old,
The last thing Merlin heard. Didst thou not say
That with thy company I should not wish
For ale or wine, or voice of man or woman;
That one thought like a lovely star should come,
And others follow, till my Heaven was full;
That one bright ray of Inspiration's light
Would warm my Soul, till it arose and cheered
As lusty as Dawn's streak makes Chanticleer;
And that no ink should dry upon my pen
Till every little black drop did produce
Fancies with thoughts that sparkled a pure white.
Didst thou not promise I should see bright gems
To startle me, though I put down secure
The hatches on my mortal eyes; promise
To give me these, that maybe would outshine
Some of these solid pearls that took long years
Ere they grew rich. Where art thou? Thou hast left
My spirit like a sea without a ship
In sight; no half-built ships are on my stocks,
And in my harbour float no finished ones

Ready to sail. Since thou hast gone, my life
Has courted sleep so oft that she grows sick
Of one that claims her service for so long;
And thou didst promise I would even mock
Sweet sleep, with thoughts of some sweet task undone—
So wouldst thou occupy my Mind.
And now, when I desire thee most—since Time
Has sent forth one white hair to draw the black
Into that treason which dethrones my youth—
Thou hast forsaken me. Since that is so,
There is no help I know of; I must plunge
Into a sea of flesh again—a sea
That's full of things to drag strong swimmers down.
Go then, false Fancy, show thy face no more;
For I will live with Pleasure in the crowd,
With her attendants, Fashion, Dance and Wine.
If thou dost come again, I'll strike thee dead—
As honest seamen, on a raft at sea,
Must strike a madman down for their life's sake.
E'en as I spake these words I felt my Mind
Possessed by Fancy, and forgot my wrath,
And all my heart inclined to hear her speak.
Thou art my life-long Love, I said; I'll not
Return to Pleasure in a city's crowd.
Pleasure can give no true and lasting joy;
Her voice is like a torrent's, in whose sound
The little birds of joy must sing unheard.
Aye, Pleasure is a planet dark, that shines
By the reflection of admiring eyes,
But Joy has her own light—and thou art Joy.
All Pleasure's thoughts are centred in her flesh,
To eat and drink, to dress, to dance, and ride,

And be where there are many eyes and ears;
And vain she is, and proud—she cannot see
One inch beyond her own two feet of hair.
I courted that false goddess once, alas!
Blind and deceived with Jacob's joy, when he
Knew not his best loved son—e'en so was I;
Until my sight returned, and I could see
Through Pleasure's silk, and saw her many faults.
Come then, sweet Fancy—surnamed Joy by me.

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